



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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Statement of U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) Regarding a Motion to Instruct Spending Reconciliation Bill Conferees on Medicaid Provisions

Mr. President, this motion instructs the Senate conferees on the spending reconciliation bill not to bring back a conference report that hurts Medicaid beneficiaries.

Last month, the House passed a spending reconciliation bill that would increase health costs and cut benefits for millions of seniors and lower-income Americans who depend on Medicaid.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, three quarters of the Medicaid savings in the House bill come from these cuts. The bill would increase health costs for 17 million people, cut benefits for five million people, and force tens of thousands off of Medicaid.

We know the damage that increasing health costs can cause. We have seen it happen. Oregon imposed just a nominal premium for some on Medicaid — from \$6 to \$20 a month. Within ten months, nearly half of the people forced to pay had been dropped from coverage. Three quarters of those who were dropped became uninsured.

These changes impose a tax on our poorest citizens.

And these changes also burden doctors, hospitals, and clinics that treat Medicaid patients. States will deduct the fees — regardless of whether providers ever get paid. Healthcare providers will pass these uncompensated costs along through higher rates for all patients in the private market.

Many poor people will pay more, but get less. The House bill allows states to cut Medicaid benefits. Although the bill would protect the poorest children, millions of children would no longer get the medical care that they need. People with disabilities and chronic conditions would also be at risk.

Some say we need to look at Medicaid's rising costs, and I agree. We need to get a handle on spending and make this program sustainable. But shifting costs and cutting benefits for our poorest and least able to pay is not the smart way to do it.

This motion instructs Senate conferees on the reconciliation bill to reject the House changes to Medicaid that would hurt Medicaid beneficiaries or undermine Medicaid's guarantee. The Senate must take a stand in support of the neediest among us.

Let us ensure that we do no harm to the vulnerable people whom Medicaid serves. And let us pass this motion.

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